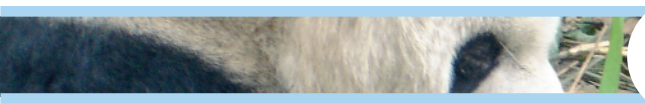

1

Getting to Know the Work Area

In This Chapter

- Understanding the Elements workspace
- Changing workspace views
- Using the Undo History palette
- Accessing Help documents
- Using keyboard shortcuts

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In Elements' work areas, you find quite a collection of tools, palettes, buttons, and options. Just a quick glance at the Elements workspace when you enter the Standard Edit mode shows you some of the power that Elements offers with just a click of your mouse. With all the possibilities, the Elements workspace can be intimidating. To ease your introduction to the many options for editing your pictures, we break them down for you in this chapter.

Elements has several work areas, and we start off by introducing you to the one you'll likely use most often, Standard Edit mode. This is the mode in which you can be creative with all the tools and features Photoshop Elements is known for, such as filters, drawing tools, layers, and more. We then introduce other work areas and tools you may not be as familiar with — Quick Fix mode for making common corrections to photos, Creation Setup mode for collecting your photos into creations such as calendars, and the Photo Bin for navigating among all your open images.

Before you start working in Elements, you'll find it helpful to know how to undo edits so you can start over easily and where you can find additional sources of help within Elements. We also explain one of the handiest ways to select tools and enter common commands — keyboard shortcuts.

Elements also includes the Organizer, a powerful tool for acquiring your images and keeping them organized. The Organizer includes features that help you view and search for images, too. We introduce the Organizer in Part II.

Getting Around in Standard Edit Mode

Standard Edit mode offers bundles of tools for editing your images, from correction tools for fixing color and clarity to filters, layers, and more for creating entirely original images either from existing photos or from scratch. But all these tools also make Standard Edit mode complex.

Figure 1-1 shows Elements in Standard Edit mode, highlighting all the tools and features we discuss in the sections that follow.

Jumping to Standard Edit mode

You can move into Standard Edit mode in a couple of ways:

- **From the initial Welcome screen,** click Edit and Enhance Photos and open a photo. Your Elements window appears in Standard Edit mode, as shown in Figure 1-1.
- **From the Organizer,** click Edit in the Shortcuts Bar and select Go to Standard Edit from the drop-down menu.

Examining the Image window

Not surprisingly, the Image window's tools and features are most useful when an image is actually open in the window. To get an image into the image window (refer to Figure 1-1), follow these steps:

1. **Click the Open tool in the Shortcuts bar.**

   The standard Open dialog box appears. It works like any ordinary Open dialog box you find in other applications.

2. **Move around your hard drive by using methods you know to open folders and select a picture.**

   If you haven't yet downloaded digital camera images or acquired scanned photos and want an image to experiment with, you can use an image found in your My Pictures folder that was installed with Windows.

3. **After selecting a picture, click Open.**

   The photo opens in a new image window in Elements.

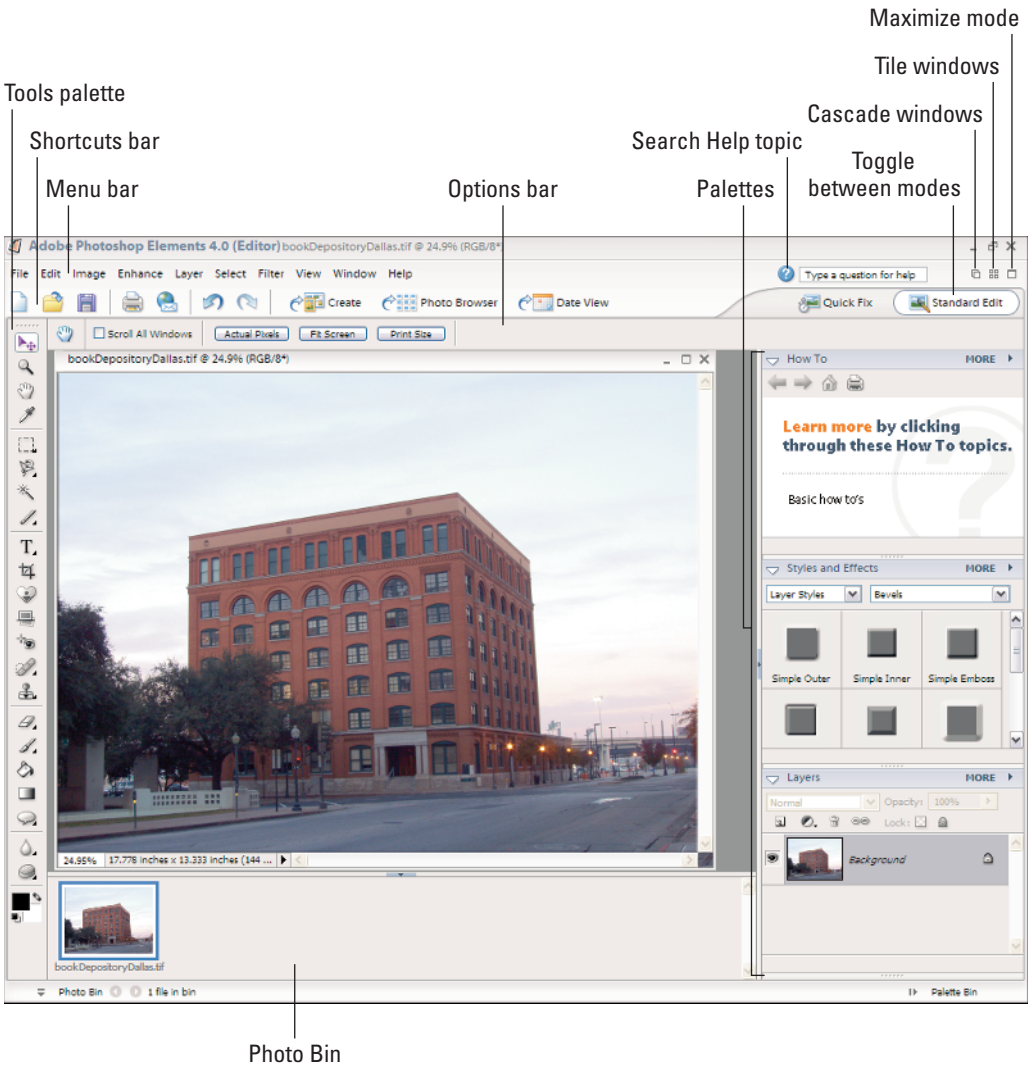

Figure 1-1: The Photoshop Elements workspace shown when you open a file in Standard Edit mode.

You can open as many image windows in Elements as your computer memory can handle. As each new file is opened, a thumbnail image is added to the Photo Bin at the bottom of the screen, and the image windows are stacked, with the current active image on the topmost window. To bring another open file to the foreground and make it active, click the respective thumbnail in the Photo Bin.

Here's a quick look at important items in the image window, shown in Figure 1-2:

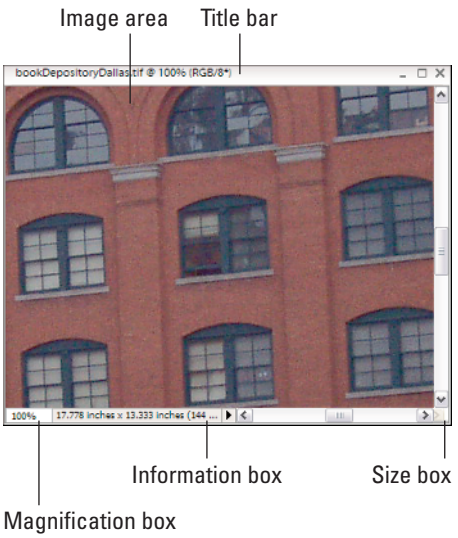

Figure 1-2: The image window displays an open file within the Elements workspace.

- **Scroll bars** become active when you zoom in on an image. You can click the scroll arrows, move the Scroll bar, or grab the Hand tool in the Tools palette and drag within the window to move the image around.
- **The Magnification box** shows you at a glance how much you've zoomed in or out.
- **The Information box** shows you a read-out for a particular tidbit of information. You can choose what information you want to see in this area by choosing one of the options from the pop-up menu, which we discuss in more detail later in this section.

  When working on an image in Elements, you always want to know the physical image size, the image's resolution, and the color mode (these terms are explained in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4). Regardless of which menu option you choose in the status bar, you can get a quick glimpse at these essential stats by clicking the Information box, which displays a pop-up menu like the one shown in Figure 1-3.

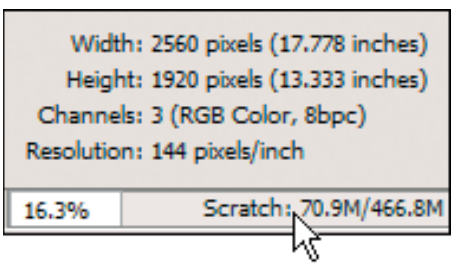

Figure 1-3: Click the readout in the status bar and a pop-up menu shows you important information about your file.

- **The Size box** enables you to resize the window. Move the cursor to the box and a diagonal line with two opposing arrows appears. When the cursor changes, drag in or out to size the window smaller or larger.

  You can also resize the window by dragging any of the other corners in or out.
- Click **the Minimize button** (the _ button in the upper-right corner of the image window) and the window hides from view. It's still open; you just click the image in the Photo Bin to maximize the window.

- If you click **the Maximize button** (the button with the box-shaped icon), the Title bar shown at the top of the window disappears and provides you a little more room for viewing images in the window.
- You can click **the Close button** (it's shaped like an X) to close the active image window and keep Elements open. Alternatively, you can use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+W or menu command File➪Close to close the active window.

Now that you're familiar with the image window overall, we want to introduce you to the Information box's pop-up menu, which enables you to choose the type of information you want to view in the Information box. Click the right-pointing arrow to open the menu, as shown in Figure 1-4. Here's the lowdown on the options you find in the pop-up menu:

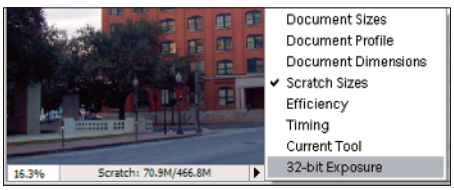

Figure 1-4: From the pop-up menu in the status bar, you select commands that provide information about your file.

- **Document Sizes:** Shows you the saved file size.
- **Document Profile:** Shows you the color profile used with the file.
- **Document Dimensions:** Shows you the physical size in your default unit of measure, such as inches.
- **Scratch Sizes:** As shown in Figure 1-4, displays the amount of memory on your hard drive that is consumed by all documents open in Elements. For example 20M/200M indicates that the open documents consume 20 megabytes, and a total of 200 megabytes are available for Elements to edit your images. As you add more content to a file — such as adding new layers, the first figure grows while the second figure remains static.
- **Efficiency:** This indicates how many operations you are performing in RAM as opposed to using your scratch disk. When the number is 100%, you are working in RAM. When the number drops below 100%, you are using the scratch disk. If you continually work below 100%, it's a good indication that you need to buy more RAM to increase your efficiency.
- **Timing:** Indicates the time it took to complete the last operation.
- **Current Tool:** Shows the name of the current tool selected from the Tools palette.
- **32-bit Exposure:** This menu command provides you an option for adjusting the preview image for viewing a High Dynamic Range (HDR) document on your monitor.

Don't worry about trying to understand all these terms. The important thing to know is that you can visit the pop-up menu and change the items at will during your editing sessions.

Moving through the Menu bar

Like just about every program you launch in Windows, Elements supports drop-down menus. The menus are logically constructed and identified to provide commands for working with your pictures (commands that you don't find supported in tools and palettes). A quick glimpse at the menu names gives you a hint of what might be contained in a given menu list.

The ten different menus are as follows:

- **File menu:** Just as you might suspect, the File menu contains commands for working with your picture as a file. You find commands for saving, opening, processing, importing, exporting, and printing in the menu list. We cover saving files in Chapter 3 and printing or exporting for other output in Part V.
- **Edit menu:** As you might guess, the old-fashioned Copy/Cut/Paste commands are located here. Additionally, you have some important file settings commands in the menu, including preferences, which we cover in more detail in Chapter 2.
- **Image menu:** You find yourself in the Image menu when you want to affect changes to the entire image, such as changing a color mode or cropping, rotating, and resizing images. For details about sizing and color modes, check out Chapter 3. For more about cropping and rotating images, flip to Chapter 9.
- **Enhance menu:** Just the name of this menu should tell you what commands to expect here. This is where you go to change image appearances, such as changing the brightness and contrast, adjusting color and lighting, and doing some smart fix-up work to improve image appearance. In Chapters 9 and 10, you find out how to use correction tools so your images look their best.
- **Layer menu:** As we describe in great detail in Chapter 8 (a whole chapter just about layers), most kinds of editing you do in Elements are best handled using layers. Elements neatly tucks away all the relevant commands associated with working in layers right here.
- **Select menu:** Of just about equal importance to layers is working with selections. Whereas the Image menu contains commands that are applied to the entire image, you can edit isolated areas of images by using the commands in the Select menu. In order to isolate an area, you need to create a selection, as we explain in Chapter 7. This menu contains commands to help you with all the essential tasks related to working with selections.
- **Filter menu:** The Filter menu is where you leave the world of photography and explore the world of a fine artist. With tons of different filter commands, you can create some extraordinary effects. Find out all about filters in Chapter 11.

- **View menu:** Zooming in and out of images, turning on a grid, exposing horizontal and vertical rulers, adding annotations, and checking out the print size of your pictures are handled in the View menu. Chapter 5 unearths secrets of the Zoom tool, rulers, and more.
- **Window menu:** Elements supports a number of different palettes, as we explain later in this chapter. Elements has so many palettes, keeping them all open at one time is impractical. Thanks to the Window menu, you can easily view and hide palettes, reopen the Welcome window, tile and cascade open windows, and bring an inactive window to the foreground.
- **Help menu:** Hopefully, you get all you need right here in this book; but just in case we miss something (or the neighbor has borrowed it, fine book that it is), you have some interactive Help right at your mouse-tip in the Help menu. The menu also offers links to Adobe's Web site for more information and a little assistance, courtesy of the tutorials accessible in this menu. (Find a little more detail about accessing help later in this chapter.)

Uncovering the context menus

Context menus are common to many programs, and Photoshop Elements is no exception. They're those little menus that appear when you right-click, offering commands and tools related to whatever area or tool you right-clicked.

The context menus are your solution when you may be in doubt about where to find a command in a menu. You just right-click an item, and a pop-up menu opens. As you become familiar with Photoshop Elements and you find yourself struggling to find a menu command, always try to first open a context menu and look for the command you want in the menu list.

Because context menus provide commands respective to the tool you're using, the menu commands change according to what tool or feature you are using at the moment you open a context menu. For example, in Figure 1-5, you can see the context menu that appears after we create a selection marquee and right-click that marquee in the Image window. Notice that the commands are all related to selections.

Figure 1-5: A context menu for selections.

Using the Tools palette

Elements provides a good number of palettes for different purposes. The one you'll find you use most is the Tools palette. In palette hierarchy terms, you typically first click a tool in the Tools palette and then use another palette for additional tool options or use the Options bar for fine-tuning your tool instruments. More often than not, clicking a tool in the Tools palette is your first step in most editing sessions.

Tools can be easily accessed in Elements by pressing shortcut keys on your keyboard. For a quick glance at the Tools palette and the keystrokes needed to access the tools, look over Figure 1-6.

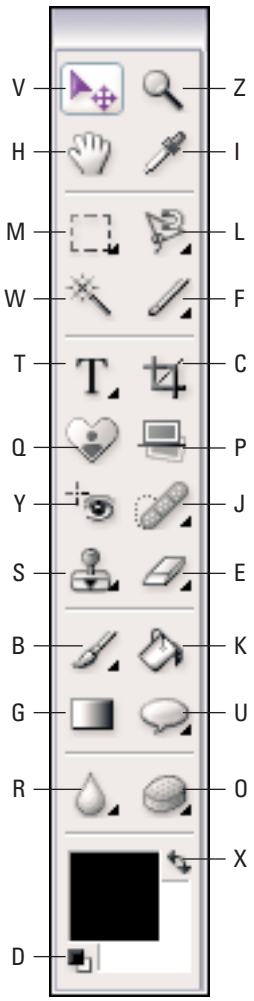

Figure 1-6: You access Tools by clicking the tool in the Tools palette or typing the respective character on your keyboard.

If you accidentally press the Tab key on your keyboard, the Tools palette hides from view. Press Tab again and the Tools palette reappears.

Notice in the Tools palette that several tools appear with a tiny arrow pointing right and downward on the lower-right corner of each tool. Whenever you see this arrowhead, remember that more tools are nested within that tool group. Click a tool with an arrowhead and hold the mouse button down. A pop-up toolbar opens, as shown in Figure 1-7, and offers you more tool selections within that group.

To select tools within a tool group by using keystrokes, press the Shift key and strike the respective key (shown in Figure 1-6) to access the tool. Keep the Shift key down and repeatedly press the shortcut key to scroll through all tools in a given group.

The shortcuts work for you at all times except when typing text. Be certain to click in the Tools palette to select a tool if your last edit was made with one of the Type tools.

The tools are varied, and you may find that you won't use all the tools in the Tools palette in your workflow. Rather than describe the tool functions here, we address the tools in the remaining chapters in this book as they pertain to the respective Elements tasks.

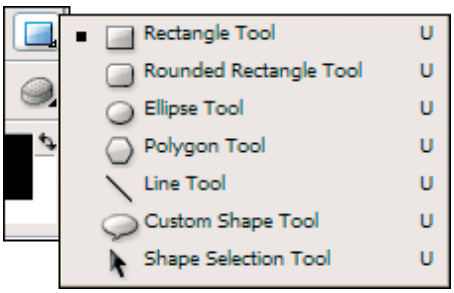

Figure 1-7: Click and hold the mouse button on a tool that has a tiny arrowhead, and a pop-up toolbar opens.

Playing with palettes

Elements provides you with a bunch of palettes that contain settings and options used to refine the tools you select in the Tools palette and tasks you perform to edit images. As an example of how a palette is used, assume for a moment that you want to let your creative juices loose and create a Picasso-esque painting — something that you can easily do in Photoshop Elements.

You first click the Brush tool and then click a color in the Color Swatches palette. On a new canvas, you begin to paint. When you want to change color, you click again in the Color Swatches palette on a different color. This kind of interactivity between the Tools palette and another palette is something you will frequently use in Elements.

Palettes are accessed from either the Palette Bin or from the Window menu. Many options in palettes are intuitive. To become familiar with various palette options, just poke around a little, and most of the options will become familiar to you.

Selecting tool options from the Options bar

When you click a tool in the Tools palette, the Options bar offers you choices specific to a selected tool. Figure 1-8 shows the options available when the Clone Stamp tool is selected.

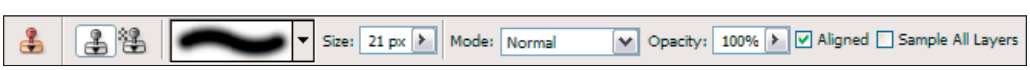

Figure 1-8: The Options bar provides attribute choices for a tool selected in the Tools palette.

Juggling all your interface options

With all the settings you can use for any given tool, it can become downright frustrating trying to figure out exactly where to select an option for the edit you want to make. To help simplify the process of using tools and selecting options for the tools, here's what you might do in a normal workflow:

1. **Select a tool in the Tools palette.**

   Obviously, you need to know what task you want to perform, so selecting the proper tool to complete the task is important to know up-front.

2. **Take a quick look at the Options bar.**

   Before moving to other options choices, be certain you look over the choices in the Options bar. If you want to use a tool like the Brush tool or the Clone Stamp tool, perhaps you want to make a decision about what size brush tip you want to use. This choice is specific to the selected tool and therefore appears as an Options bar choice.

3. **Open a palette for more options.**

   If you, for example, want to use the Brush tool to apply some color to an image, after selecting the Brush tip in the Options bar, open the Color Swatches palette and select a color.

4. **Open the More menu.**

   Maybe the color you want to use doesn't appear in the Color Swatches palette. Your next stop is the More menu. From the menu choices, you can load different swatch libraries that provide more color options.

Try following the same sequence when you want to edit images in Elements by first selecting a tool, then checking out the Options bar, opening palettes related to providing choices for the task at hand, and finally clicking the More button for additional choices in the palettes.

Looking at the Shortcuts bar

You find the Shortcuts bar just above the Options bar and below the Menu bar. The Shortcuts bar, shown in Figure 1-9, serves two purposes. Tools in the Shortcuts bar are available for quick access to some of the most common tasks you perform in Elements. Secondly, buttons appear for quick access to Elements' other functions that involve organizing documents, browsing photos, or viewing a calendar.

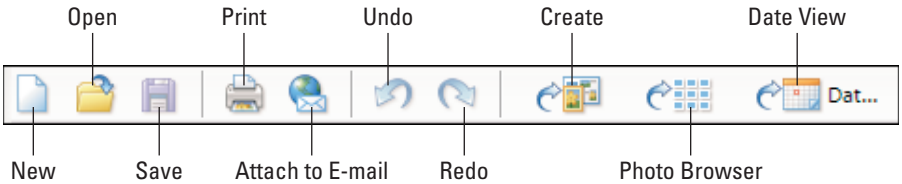

Figure 1-9: In Standard Edit mode, the Shortcuts bar provides tools and viewing options.

Depending on your editing mode, such as Standard Edit, Quick Fix, or one of the other viewing modes, the Shortcuts bar changes to provide different tools and buttons. Figure 1-9 shows how the Shortcuts bar appears when viewed in Standard Edit mode.

The Shortcuts bar contains tools and buttons grouped together as follows:

- The first group offers quick access to file management commands. You can create a new file, open a file, or save a file by clicking one of the first three tools in the Shortcuts bar.
- Click the Print tool to print a file or the Attach to E-mail tool to attach an open document to a new e-mail message in your default e-mail program.
- Click Undo to undo an edit and Redo to redo an undone edit.
- For a quick jump to all the wonderful organizing features provided in Elements, such as creating slide shows, calendars, and postcards or writing to video discs, click the Create button. Click Photo Browser to open the Photo Browser window, where you can easily manage your pictures. The Date View shows you a calendar, where you can add thumbnails of your pictures.

Changing Workspaces

When you're in Standard Edit mode, discussed in preceding sections, you can apply any kind of edits to a picture, improve the appearance, and apply all that Elements offers you. This mode is the richest editor in Elements in terms of accessing all features. Because Elements has so many different kinds of editing opportunities, the program offers you other workspace views, tailored to the kinds of tasks people typically want to perform.

Using Quick Fix mode

The Quick Fix mode is designed to provide you with just those tools that are needed to prepare a picture for its intended destination, whether it be printing, on-screen viewing, or one of the other organizing items. Use this mode to make your pictures look good. You won't find tools for adding text, painting with brushes, or applying gradients in Quick Fix mode. Rather, what you find is a completely different set of palettes for balancing contrast and brightness, lighting, sharpening, and so on. This mode is like having a digital darkroom on your desktop, where you take care of perfecting an image like you would in analog photography darkrooms.

To enter the Quick Fix mode while you are in Standard Edit mode, click the Quick Fix button adjacent to the Shortcuts bar; the view changes, as shown in Figure 1-10.

If you want to start up Elements in Quick Fix mode, click the Quick Fix button in the Welcome screen when you first launch the program.

There are several differences between Standard Edit mode and Quick Fix mode:

- **Completely different sets of palettes are docked in the Palette Bin.** All the palettes in Quick Fix mode are related to adjusting brightness controls and are designed to improve the overall appearance of your pictures. In addition, all the Window menu commands for accessing palettes are grayed out. While you work in Quick Fix mode, Elements is insistent on limiting your use of palettes to just those palettes docked in the Palette Bin. Moreover, you cannot undock palettes from the Palette Bin by dragging them out, as you can in other modes.
- **The Tools palette disappears.** Quick Fix mode offers you only the Zoom tool, Hand tool, Genie Brush tool, Crop tool, and Red Eye Removal tool in the Tools palette. None of the other Elements tools are accessible while you work in this mode.
- **Multiple viewing options are available.** Notice in Figure 1-10 that there are two views of the same image. One view displays the raw, unedited image. The After view shows you the results of changes you make with palette options and menu commands.

If you want to return to the Standard Edit mode, click the Standard Edit button.

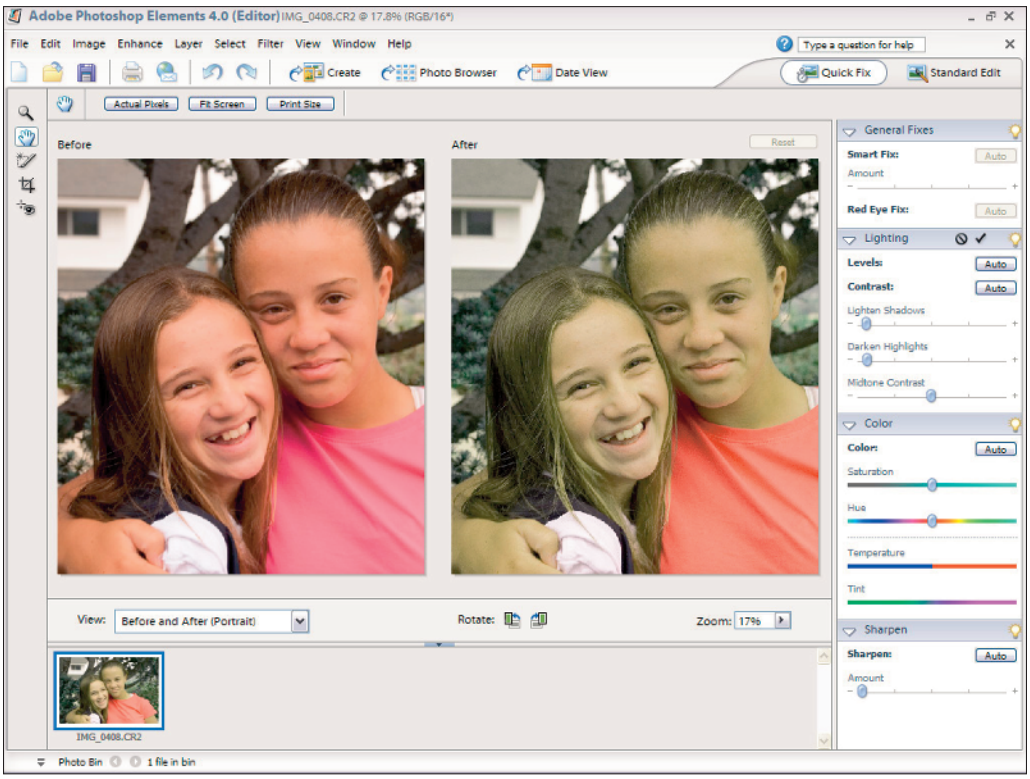

Figure 1-10: Click Quick Fix in Standard Edit mode, and the workspace changes.

Using Creation Setup

To organize your pictures for display in a variety of different ways, you begin by accessing the Creation Setup window. While in either Standard Edit or Quick Fix mode, click the Create button on the Shortcuts bar. The Creation Setup window opens, as shown in Figure 1-11.

We cover each option available in the Creation Setup window in greater detail in Chapter 16.

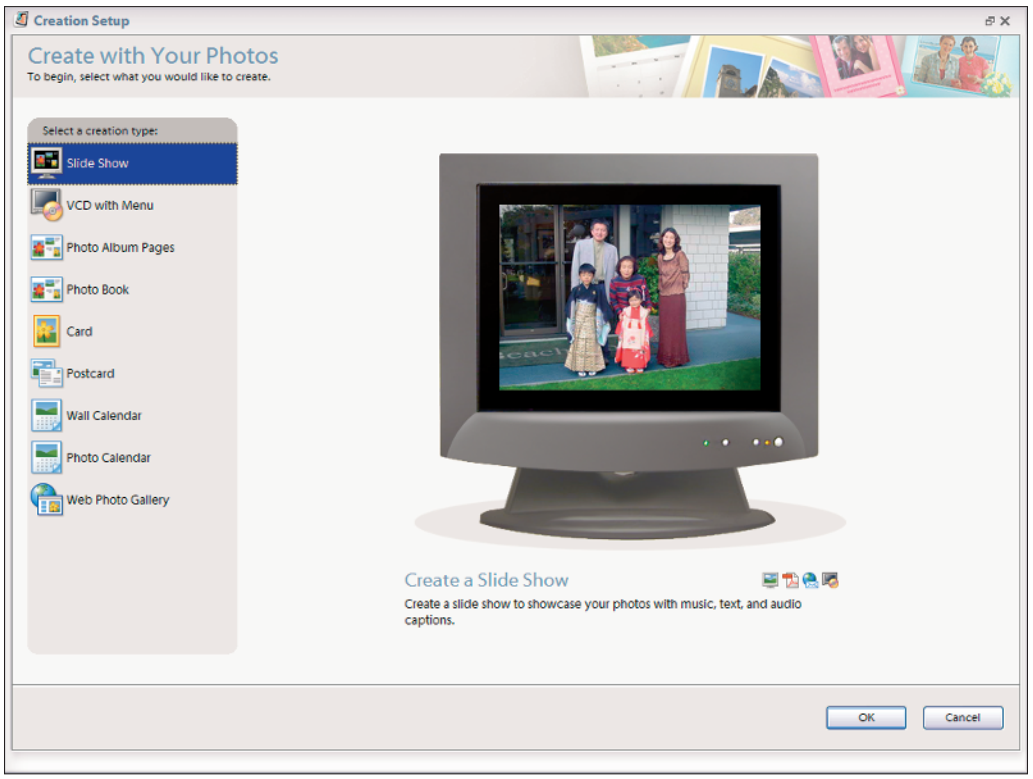

Figure 1-11: Click Create in either Standard Edit or Quick Fix mode to open the Creation Setup window.

Using the Photo Bin

The Photo Bin displays thumbnail views of all your open images. Regardless of whether you work in Standard Edit or Quick Fix mode, you can immediately see a small image of all the pictures you have open at one time, as shown in Figure 1-12. You can also see thumbnail views of all the different views you create for a single picture. Find out all the details in the sections that follow.

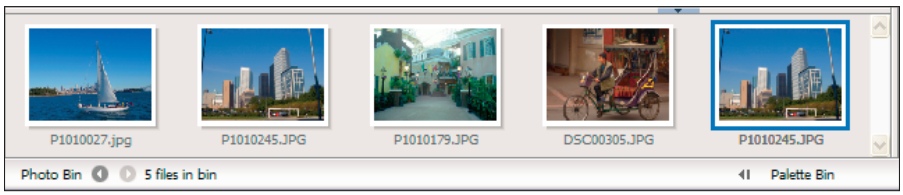

Figure 1-12: All open pictures and new views are displayed as thumbnails in the Photo Bin.

If you want to rearrange the thumbnails in the Photo Bin, just click and drag horizontally to reorganize the order of the thumbnails.

Creating different views of an image

What? Different views of the same picture, you say? Yes indeed. You might create a new view when you want to zoom in on an area for some precise editing and then want to switch back to a wider view. Here's how you do it:

1. **Click an image's thumbnail in the Photo Bin.**

   The respective photo appears in the image window as the active document.

2. **Choose View➪New Window for *<filename>*.**

   Note that *<filename>* is the name of the file in the image window.

3. **Zoom to the new view.**

   A new view appears for the active document, and you see another thumbnail image added to the Photo Bin.

   To zoom quickly, click the Zoom tool and click a few times on the picture in the image window to zoom into the photo.

4. **Toggle views of the same image.**

   Click one thumbnail and you see the opening view; click the other thumbnail and you see the zoomed view.

Hiding the Photo Bin

The Photo Bin takes up a lot of room at the bottom of the image window, and you're not likely to want it open all the time while editing some pictures. Fortunately, Elements provides you with two methods for hiding the Photo Bin when you want to create a little more editing real estate.

To temporarily hide the Photo Bin, do one of the following:

- Place the cursor over the separator bar between the Image window and the Photo Bin. When the cursor changes to two horizontal lines with vertical opposing arrowheads, drag down to collapse the Photo Bin. When the bin is collapsed, drag the separator bar up to open the bin.
- To auto-hide the Photo Bin, open a context menu (right-click inside the Photo Bin) and select Auto-hide from the menu choices. (Alternately, you can just click the separator bar where you see the tiny arrowhead to show/hide the bin.) When you use Auto-hide, the Photo Bin automatically hides when the cursor appears in the image window. The Photo Bin automatically opens when you move the cursor below the separator bar.

Retracing Your Steps

Ever since Apple Macintosh brought a windows interface to the masses, the Undo command has been one of the most frequently used menu commands in every program developed. You make a change to your document, and if you don't like it, you simply choose Edit➪Undo or press the keyboard shortcut, Ctrl+Z.

In Elements, your options to undo your work have expanded, as we explain in the following sections.

Using the Undo History palette

Elements takes the Undo command to new levels by offering you a palette in which all your changes (well, almost all) in an editing session are recorded and available for undoing at any step in an editing sequence.

Each edit you make is recorded in the Undo History palette. To open the palette, choose Window➪Undo History. Make changes to your document, and each step is recorded in the palette, as you see in Figure 1-13.

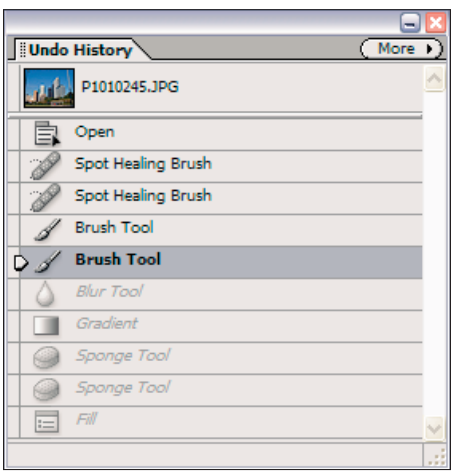

Figure 1-13: The History palette records steps in an editing session.

If Elements slows down, and you're moving along at a snail's pace, open the More drop-down menu in the History palette and select Clear Undo History. Elements flushes all the recorded history and frees up some precious memory that often enables you to work faster.

We said *almost all* steps are recorded because the number of steps the History palette can record is controlled by a preference setting that tops out at 1,000 steps. If you choose Edit➪Preferences and look at the General preferences, as we explain in more depth in Chapter 2, the number of history states defaults to 50. You can change the number to the maximum of 1,000 if you like. But realize that the more history states you record, the more memory Elements requires.

To undo the last edit, you can use the keyboard shortcut, Ctrl+Z. When you want to undo multiple edits, open the Undo History palette and click any item listed in the palette. Elements takes you to that last edit while scrubbing all the edits that follow the selected item. If you want to bring them back, just click again on any step appearing grayed out in the palette to Redo up to that level.

All your steps are listed in the Undo History palette as long as you remain in Elements and don't close the file. When the file is closed, all the history information is lost.

Reverting to the last save

As you work away in Elements, you should always plan on saving your work regularly. Each time you save in an editing session, the Undo History palette preserves the list of edits you made prior to the save and up to the maximum number of history states defined in the General preferences.

If you save, then perform more edits, and then want to return to the last saved version of your document, Elements provides you a quick, efficient way to do so. Choose Edit➪Revert, and Elements eliminates your new edits and takes you back to the last time you saved your file.

When you choose Revert, the word *Revert* appears in the Undo History palette. You can eliminate the Revert command from the Undo History palette by right-clicking Revert in the Undo History palette and choosing Delete from a context menu. This returns you to the edits made subsequent to the last save.

Getting a Helping Hand

You can reach for this book when you want some details about accomplishing a task while working in Elements. However, for those little annoying moments, and just in case some coffee stains blot out a few pages in this book, you may want to look for an alternative feature description from another source.

Rather than accumulate a library of Elements books, all you need to do is look at Elements itself to find some valuable help information quickly and easily. If you're stuck on understanding some feature, you'll find ample help documents a mouse click away that can help you overcome some frustrating moments.

Using Help

Your first stop for exploring the helpful information Elements provides you is in the Help menu. Here, you find several menu commands that offer you information:

- **Photoshop Elements Help:** Choose Help➪Photoshop Elements Help or press the F1 key to open the Elements Help file. You can type in a search topic and press Enter to open a list of items that provide helpful information on the searched words.

  For quick access to the Help document, type the text you want to search into the text box on the right side of the menu bar in Standard Edit or Quick Fix mode.
- **Glossary of Terms:** As you read this book, if we use a term that you don't completely understand, open the Photoshop Elements glossary. Here, you find definitions of terms commonly used in photography and image editing, as well as terms related specifically to Elements.
- **Tutorials:** If you want to explore some advanced learning, check out the online tutorials provided by Adobe Systems.
- **Photoshop Elements Online:** This menu command launches your default Web browser and takes you to Adobe's Web site, where you can find information about Elements, problems reported by users, and some workarounds for getting a job done.

Using PDFs from the installation CD

A number of bonus files are stored in PDF form on your installation CD. PDF files require the free Adobe Reader program or one of the commercial Acrobat viewers. Adobe Reader can be installed from the CD during your installation process.

Depending on when you purchased your Elements installer CD, the version of Adobe Reader on the CD might be outdated. If you want to stay with the latest upgrade of Adobe Reader, open your Web browser and type this address in the Location bar:

```
www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html
```

Adobe Systems provides easy, step-by-step instructions for downloading the most current, free Adobe Reader program and installing it on your computer.

Using ToolTips

As you move your cursor around tools and palettes, pause a moment before clicking the mouse. A slight delay in your actions produces a ToolTip, as shown in Figure 1-14. Elements provides you this sort of dynamic help as you move the cursor around the workspace and pause before moving to another location.

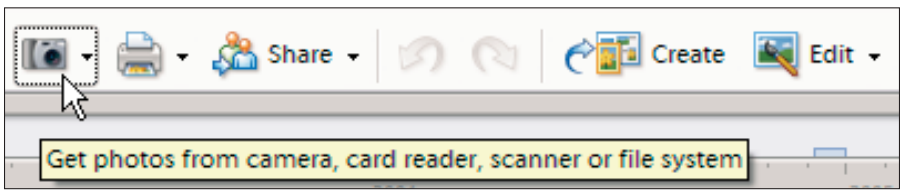

Figure 1-14: Place the cursor over a tool and pause a moment to open a ToolTip.

Using the How To palette

The default Palette Bin in Standard Edit mode contains the How To palette at the top of the bin. The How To palette lists some of the more common tasks you are likely to perform in Elements. Click the right-pointing arrowhead to expand a list and then click an item to open help information in the palette. You can scroll pages by clicking the arrows, return to the opening How To page by clicking the house icon, and print a topic by clicking the printer icon if you want to create hard copy of some help information.

Taking Charge with Shortcuts

As Emeril says, "It's time to kick it up a notch." Kicking it up a notch in Elements terms means leaving the pick and poke editing methods of the novice and graduating to techniques used by the swift keyboard master.

Using keyboard shortcuts greatly reduces your time in Elements and makes you much more proficient. The up side is that most of what you can do by moving the mouse and clicking a tool or menu command can be performed right from your keyboard by using combinations of keystrokes. The down side is that, because there are so many keyboard shortcuts to remember, learning all of them is nearly impossible.

The best way to remember keyboard shortcuts is to practice using them. After that, you might want to browse the resources where shortcuts are defined.

Here are some considerations to help you remember shortcuts and find more information about them:

- **For common tasks, always take special note of ToolTips and commands in a menu.** ToolTips provide a description of what a tool does, and they often display the keyboard shortcuts used to access the tools. Menu commands that support keyboard shortcuts list the shortcut keys to the right of command names.
- **Look over all the tips and alternate methods for performing an action that we describe throughout this book.** As you are introduced to more features in Elements, we try to offer you the keyboard shortcut options as well as tools and commands. Instead of giving you a list here, we provide keyboard shortcuts when explaining a feature.
- **Search the Help document.** Open the Elements Help document (Help➪ Photoshop Elements Help or press F1) and search for *keyboard shortcuts*. The Help document provides a comprehensive list of all the keyboard shortcuts you can use in Elements.
- **Stick with the essentials.** Try to commit to memory only those shortcuts that produce actions for your most common editing tasks.

The Cheat Sheet at the front of this book lists some common keyboard shortcuts so that you can reference them quickly and easily.

Memorizing keyboard shortcuts is not critical to your work in Photoshop Elements. You can do everything the program was designed for without ever using a shortcut. However, when you become familiar with keyboard shortcuts, you'll find yourself zooming through editing sessions with much more speed and efficiency. As a matter of fact, many advanced and professional users often forget where a menu command is contained because they rely so much on shortcut keys.